



# The Court Reporter

## A Message From Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio

Volume 3, Issue 26

There have been times when the Court has fostered changes as we continue to seek newer and hopefully better methods to the manner in which we approach juvenile justice. There are also times when changes are introduced to the Court and it is our job to make the proper adjustments to adapt to those changes.

Such is the case with the changes that were made to the truancy law last year. The Truancy Task Force has always served as a forum for educators and agencies who address truancy issues. But, now, the Task Force offers an even greater opportunity for school district and agency representatives in the county to network and share the processes they have put in place or enhanced to assure that the language of the House Bill 410 is followed.

I would also like to congratulate two of our Magistrates who have recently accepted new leadership roles. Magistrate Tom Freeman now leads a statewide organization while Magistrate Rob McCarty is now the Court's Chief Magistrate. I have every confidence that both men will be very successful in these new roles.



Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio



*Linda Tucci Teodosio*

## Truancy Task Force and Schools Face New Challenges

On April 6, 2017, things changed for school districts throughout Ohio. That is the date the Ohio General Assembly chose to make effective the policies contained in House Bill 410. The new law significantly changed the manner in which the school districts addressed truancy.

For instance, in the past, students who failed to attend school a significant amount of time were termed "chronic truants." That term has been expunged and replaced with the term "habitual truant." The standard for applying that term to a student has changed, too. In HB 410, no longer will a student's absence be recorded by the amount of consecutive days missed, but rather by the amount of hours. The new standards are 30 or more hours without a legitimate excuse, 42 or more hours in a school month, or 72 or more hours in a school year.

HB 410 added another layer to the policy by adding the term "excessive absences" for 38 or more hours in one school month and/or 65 or more hours in one school year without a legitimate excuse.

Districts have always been responsible for tracking attendance and filing at Court once the youth's attendance reached the threshold for filing. One of the changes brought about by HB 410 is the development of intervention teams and intervention plans, which fall on the districts to implement. Districts are developing programming to address truancy and working with families and students. Although this is not new, HB 410 requires the development of the intervention teams and plans, leading districts to be creative and to develop or enhance existing programming.

The Truancy Task Force Committee has been meeting consistently over the past several years. The committee consists of Juvenile Court staff, representatives from school districts and mental health agencies. The focus this year has been HB 410 and the effects it has had on districts and families. The Family Resource Center (FRC) Coordinator Lisa Karas and FRC Case Manager Nicole Huntsman co-chair the Truancy Task Force Committee and both are noticing positive outcomes.



Nicole Huntsman, left, and Lisa Karas co-chair the Truancy Task Force.

"There are school districts that have developed their intervention programs and tracking elements that have been effective," Ms. Huntsman said, "They are using the meetings as a forum to share ideas with each other".

If the intervention plan fails, the school district can file a complaint at Court. As required by HB 410 these complaints are diverted. The FRC provides mediation as the diversion option for those complaints that are directed to the FRC. If diversion fails, the complaint is filed as official.

"Prior to filing a complaint, a referral for case management through the FRC is an option that has been available and utilized by districts for years to assist with truancy and truancy-related issues," Ms. Karas stated. "What we have seen this year are more schools inquiring about how the FRC can be involved in their intervention plans."

Ms. Karas pointed out that the Court's Responder Program is already in some school districts and has continued to work with families and school administrators to address a student's truancy and other issues, as well as to promote parental involvement in their child's schooling before the child comes to the attention of the Court.

The Truancy Task Force Committee recognizes some of the challenges that come with the guidelines of HB 410 and is pleased to note the members are utilizing the meetings to address concerns and offer ideas that have worked for them.

## Magistrates Freeman, McCarty Chosen for Leadership Roles

Two Summit County Juvenile Court Magistrates have recently accepted positions of leadership. Magistrate Tom Freeman was named President of the Ohio Association of Magistrates (OAM) while Magistrate Rob McCarty was appointed Chief Magistrate by Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio.

Magistrate Freeman served the OAM as its treasurer before being elected by the membership to the president's position. He will continue to serve as its Chairman of the Juvenile Law Committee. Established in 1989, the OAM promotes professional growth, effectiveness, and common interests among its membership. The association also convenes to share ideas, issues, and solutions while also offering educational conferences. The OAM also provides a forum for the Magistrates to advance input into Ohio's judicial and legislative processes.



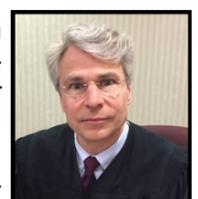
Magistrate Freeman

A graduate of The University of Akron's School of Law, Magistrate Freeman was appointed to his position at the Court in 2005. He presides over a diverse docket and is also responsible for the Court's New Paths docket which hears cases involving developmentally delayed youth.

Freeman is looking forward to the upcoming year.

"I hope to promote enhanced discussion and dialogue with the members of the association regarding the many facets of the juvenile justice system," Freeman said. "I appreciate the faith the members showed in placing me in the position of president, and I will do my absolute best to further the message and mission of the OAM."

Magistrate McCarty is also a graduate of the UA School of Law, earning his Juris Doctor in 1988. He came to the Court in 2004 after working in private practice, the City of Akron's Department of Planning and Urban Development and as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for the county's Child Support Enforcement Agency.



Magistrate McCarty

As Chief Magistrate, McCarty will have additional administrative duties, act as a liaison between Judge Teodosio and the Court Magistrates, and oversee project work.

"I enthusiastically accept the responsibilities that come with the role of Chief Magistrate," he said. "The Court has an outstanding roster of Magistrates and I look forward to working even closer with this group of jurists who are committed to serving the Court and the community."

Judge Teodosio knows the two men are up to the task.

"I am certain that Tom and Rob will bring the same purpose and professionalism to their new roles that they bring to their jobs every day," said Judge Teodosio. "The fact that they has been placed in these roles is a demonstration of the respect their colleagues have for them."